The RUBAIYAT of

Omar Khayyam

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THE RUBAIYAT *of* OMAR KHAYYAM

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AS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY EDWARD FITZGERALD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY ADELAIDE HANSCOM
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WAKE! for the Sun who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

BEFORE the phantom of
False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the
Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is pre-
pared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worship-
per outside?"

AND, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

NOW the New Year reviving
old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude
retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES
on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the
ground suspires.

IRAM indeed is gone with
all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup
where no one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the
Vine,
And many a garden by the water
blows.

AND David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!''—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

COME, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter — and the Bird is on the Wing.

WHETHER at Naishápúr
or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or
bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing
drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling
one by one.

EACH Morn a thousand Roses
brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose
of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that
brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád
away.

WELL, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.

WITH me along the strip
of Herbage strewn
That just divides the desert from
the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán
is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his
golden Throne!

A BOOK of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

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SOME for the Glories of this
World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise
to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the
Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant
Drum!

LOOK to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

AND those who husbanded
the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the
winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth
are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug
up again.

THE Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

THINK, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

THEY say the Lion and the
Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried
and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—
the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot
break his Sleep.

I SOMETIMES think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

AND this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

AH, my Belovéd, fill the
Cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regret and future
Fears:
To-morrow! — Why, To-morrow
I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n
thousand Years.

FOR some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

AND we that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend — ourselves to make a Couch — for whom?

AH, make the most of what
we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust
descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust,
to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans
Singer, and—sans End!

ALIKE for those who for
To-DAY prepare,
And those that after some
To-MORROW stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of
Darkness cries,
"Fools! your Reward is Neither
Here nor There."

WHY, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd,
Of the two World's so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

MYSELF when young did
eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great
argument
About it and about: but
evermore
Came out by the same door where
in I went.

WITH them the seed of
Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought
to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that
I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like
Wind I go."

INTO this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing

WHAT, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without. asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

UP from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate:
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

THERE was the Door to
which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which
I might not see;
Some little talk awhile of ME and
THEE
There was—and then no more of
THEE and ME.

EARTH could not answer; nor
the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord
forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his
Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night
and Morn.

THEN of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness, and I heard,
As from Without — "THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

THEN to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

I THINK the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take--and give!

FOR I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently Brother, gently, pray!"

AND has not such a Story
from of Old
Down Man's successive genera-
tions roll'd
Of such a cloud of saturated
Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human
mould?

AND not a drop that from
our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may
steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in
some Eye
There hidden — far beneath, and
long ago.

AS then the Tulip for her
morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil
looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till
Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an
empty Cup.

PERPLEXT no more with
Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds
resign,
And lose your fingers in the
tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of
Wine.

AND if the Wine you drink,
the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends
in—Yes;
Think then you are To-DAY what
YESTERDAY
You were—To-MORROW you shall
not be less.

SO when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

WHY, if the Soul can fling
the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven
ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a
Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to
abide?

'TIS but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

AND fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more
The Eternal Sákí from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

WHEN You and I behind
the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the
World shall last,
Which of our Coming and De-
parture heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a
pebble-cast.

A MOMENT'S Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

WOULD you that spangle
of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it,
Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False
and True;
And upon what, prithee, does life
depend?

A HAIR perhaps divides the
False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif were the
clue—
Could you but find it—to the
Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER
too;

WHOSE secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains.

A MOMENT guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

BUT if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze To-day, while You are You—how then
To-morrow, You when shall be You no more?

WASTE not your Hour, nor
in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and
dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful
Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter,
Fruit.

YOU know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

FOR "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—
Wine.

AH, but my Computations, People say
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday.

AND lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 't was—the Grape!

THE Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The Sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

THE mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

WHY, be this Juice the
growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as
a Snare?
A Blessing, we should use it, should
we not?
And if a Curse—why, then Who
set it there?

I MUST abjure the Balm of
Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning
ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner
Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled
into Dust!

OH, threats of Hell and Hopes
of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain — *This*
Life flies,
One thing is certain and the rest
is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown
for ever dies.

STRANGE, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

THE Revelations of Devout
and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Proph-
ets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke
from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to
Sleep return'd.

I SENT my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Hea'vn and Hell:"

HEAV'N but the Vision of
fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul
on fire
Cast on the Darkness into which
Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon
expire.

WE are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

BUT helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days.
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

THE Ball no question makes
of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the
Player goes,
And He that toss'd you down into
the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows
—HE knows!

THE Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

AND that inverted Bowl they
call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we
live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—
for it
As impotently moves as you
or I.

WITH Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

YESTERDAY *This* Day's
Madness did prepare;
To-MORROW'S Silence, Triumph, or
Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence
you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you
go, nor where.

I TELL you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtari they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

THE Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

AND this I know: whether
the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume
me quite,
One flash of It within the Tavern
caught
Better than in the Temple lost
outright.

WHAT! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

WHAT! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh, the sorry trade!

OH Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

OH, Thou, who Man of baser
Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the
Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face
of Man
Is blacken'd — Man's forgiveness
give — and take!

AS under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

SHAPES of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

SAID one among them—
"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth
was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be
broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless
Earth again."

THEN said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

AFTER a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly make:
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

WHEREAT some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

"WHY," said another,
"Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss
to Hell
The luckless Pots he marr'd in
making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 't will all
be well."

"WELL," murmur'd one,
"Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is
gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar
Juice,
Methinks I might recover by
and by."

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

AH, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

THAT ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

INDEED the Idols I have loved
so long
Have done my credit in this World
much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a
shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a
Song.

INDEED, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

AND much as Wine has
play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of
Honour—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners
buy
One half so precious as the stuff
they sell.

YET, Ah, that Spring should
vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manu-
script should close!
The Nightingale that in the
branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown
again, who knows!

WOULD but the Desert of
the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed,
reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveller
might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage
of the field!

WOULD but some wingéd
Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of
Fate,
And make the stern Recorder
otherwise
Enregister, or quite oblite-
rate!

AH Love! could you and I
with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of
Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—
and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's
desire!

YON rising Moon that looks
for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax
and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look
for us
Through this same Garden—and
for *one* in vain!

AND when like her, oh Sákí,
you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd
on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach
the spot
Where I made One—turn down
an empty Glass!

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